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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 003978

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TAGS: PREL UNSC I2 FR

SUBJECT: CONSTRUCTIVE FRENCH MFA LINE ON MID-YEAR
MULTINATIONAL FORCE IRAQ REVIEW

REF: STATE 94552

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff discussed reftel points on the June 15 UNSC review of the Multinational Force Iraq (MNF-1) mandate and current DFI/IAMB arrangements with MFA Iraq desk officer Jean-Marie Safa and MFA UN Action Officer for Iraq Nicolas Kassianides June 12. Both Safa and Kassianides expected that the June 15 UNSC consultations would be non-contentious, and they affirmed that France would offer continued support for UNSCR 1637. Kassianides noted particular GoF interest in the briefing the U.S. would give on behalf of MNF-1, and expressed hope that it would address in detail the situation on the ground and future prospects.

¶2. (C) Safa added that the GoF remained convinced that a "political horizon" for an eventual MNF-1 withdrawal would provide a significant boost to PM Maliki's efforts at national reconciliation; at the same time, Safa made clear that the GoF was not seeking a specific or imminent withdrawal date. In response, poloff cautioned against artificial timetables and reiterated the continued need for a conditions-based approach to MNF-1 troop levels, in close consultation with commanders on the ground and Iraqi authorities. Poloff also stressed that the U.S. had affirmed on multiple occasions that U.S. troops would stay in Iraq "not one day longer than necessary" and that we remained there at the behest of the sovereign, democratically elected Iraqi government. Poloff also stressed the need for concrete support to the new Iraqi government, in the form of increased assistance, debt relief, and capacity building.

¶3. (C) In closing, Kassianides expressed interest in additional information on the "Iraq compact" initiative, noting that FCO Iraq Policy Unit Chief Dominic Asquith had briefed MFA officials on UK views during a visit to Paris the previous week.

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